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CIA says Yurchenko directed spy operations in the U.S. and Canada

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WASHINGTON — The CIA, in its first statement on Soviet defector Vitaly Yurchenko, said yesterday that the KGB official was deputy chief of a department responsible for spying on the United States and Canada and that his duties included mobilizing Soviet agents "after the beginning of war."

The CIA, criticized in Congress and elsewhere for allegedly bungling the Yurchenko defection, released a three-page detailed biography of the 49-year-old intelligence official, indicating he had been a prime catch despite his decision to return to the Soviet Union.

Yurchenko, in a dramatic televised news conference Monday at the Soviet Embassy compound here, said he had not defected but had been kidnapped by CIA agents in Rome, then drugged, brought to the United States against his wishes and brutally treated until he escaped to the Soviet Embassy.

He returned to Moscow Wednesday aboard a special Soviet airliner flight.

The State Department denied Yurchenko's assertions as "completely false and without any foundation." But a spokesman for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence said yesterday that the administration planned a thorough internal review of the case, including a check on what knowledge of CIA methods and interest areas Yurchenko might have taken back to Moscow.

Faced with allegations that Yurchenko was a Moscow-manipulated "setup" defector meant to embarrass the United States on the eve of the summit meeting between President Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev, the CIA for the first time went into detail publicly to describe his background, presumably obtained from interrogations.

The biography noted that Yurchenko had "seriously strained" relations with his wife, an engineer in Moscow.

The CIA is reported to have allowed him to travel to Canada for an abortive meeting with the wife of another Soviet diplomat with whom he was said to have been in love. The



Vitaly Yurchenko
Considered a prime catch

woman, never identified, was said to have spurned his offer to bring her to the United States and join him in exile.

The profile released by the CIA late yesterday portrayed Yurchenko as a highly trained agent, promoted from submarine service in the Red Navy to 16 years of KGB service, culminating in his promotion in April to deputy chief of the First Department "for work against the United States and Canada."

"The department," the CIA said, "was responsible for supervising the KGB residencies in the United States and Canada; for coordinating work against the United States by other First Chief Directorate components through Group North; for assisting all other elements of the KGB ... in work against American citizens, and for coordinating work against the United States with security services of other communist countries."

Yurchenko's other duties, the profile said, included "supervising the KGB residencies in Ottawa and Montreal, Canada."

His duties, the CIA said, also included "mobilization work, including preparing the First Department for wartime; preparing plans for the deployment and use of the operational staff; selecting agents to be used after the beginning of war and working out agent communications plans."